

FAIRBURY, ILLINOIS HISTORY STORIES

by

Dale C. Maley

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Fairbury, Illinois History Stories

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Foreword

Fairbury is a small town located in Central Illinois. It is 100 miles south of Chicago and 60 miles east of Peoria. It was founded in 1857 when the railroad first crossed Central Illinois.

The author developed an outline for broadcasting twenty-one short stories about Fairbury history on the local radio station.

This short story converts the outline for the radio audio history segments into this written short story.

It is hoped this book helps to inform current Fairbury residents about the colorful history of Fairbury. It is hoped this short story will help to educate future historians who are investigating Fairbury history.

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CHAPTER 1

Author's Background and Interest in Fairbury History

The author is a 5th generation native of Fairbury. He attended Fairbury-Cropsey High School. The author married another 5th generation Fairbury native, Connie Sue Wells. He then graduated from the University of Illinois with a B.S. in Agricultural Engineering.

Later, he graduated from Illinois State University with a Masters in Business Administration. The author worked at Caterpillar Inc. for 36 years and retired at the end of 2015.

One of my grandmothers, Francis Ann Bodley Maley, was the only Livingston County Nurse until her death in 1968. She was a very short lady. Many Fairbury current residents probably got a shot in school from her.

One of my grandfathers, Harold Henline Dameron, worked his whole life and retired from the TP&W railroad. His wife, Beulah Elizabeth Cornwell Dameron, taught school in Fairbury country schools and at Edison grade school in Fairbury.

In 2009, my father, Clarence Charles Maley, passed away. My mother continued to live at the farm house for three more winters. At that point, she announced she was moving to town.

We had to clean out the old farm house before we sold it. It contained materials from five generations of our family. I ended up with most of the historical information. I used this information to trace our family tree back to the various countries in Europe. I made four printed scrapbooks of our family history and gave copies to other family members.

The genealogy search of our family history did not find any horse thieves or murderers in our family tree. Our most famous ancestor was Major William Bodley. He fought in Revolutionary War with General Washington and had farm in Valley Forge. It is likely that Washington's army spent their terrible winter on his farm, but no written verification of this has been found. His son went to Indiana. His grandson, John Edward Bodley Sr. moved from Indiana to Lodemia, north of Fairbury in 1852.

On my mother's side, William Hughes Cornwell fought in Civil War. He was shot in the hip, captured, sent to the dreaded Andersonville prison. The death rate was about 33% at Andersonville due mostly to starvation and associated diseases. The prison commander was tried and hung as war criminal shortly after the end of the Civil War. The prison commander was the only man prosecuted at the end of the Civil War. My ancestor survived five months at Andersonville. He is buried at Princeville, north of Peoria.

Also on my mother's side, was John Russell Litchfield, from Flanagan. He was blown up and killed when trying to rescue comrade from front lines in France in World War I. He received the highest medals from both the United States and France. The USS Litchfield Navy ship was built and named after him. One of his uniforms is in the Pontiac War Museum.

Then Bryan Spence started the Facebook History page. It has grown to about 2,000 members. When it started, my mother and sister said I liked history and I should check it out. Because I already had so many family history items, I quickly became the main poster.

This led to researching and writing 4 Fairbury history books. I sell the e-books on Amazon. I have also donated printed copies to the Dominy Memorial Library, Fairbury

Echoes Museum, and the Pontiac library. I have also given numerous lectures to different area civic groups. I am also on the board of the Fairbury Echoes Museum.

CHAPTER 2

How Fairbury Got Started

In 1857, the TP&W railroad was being laid from Peoria to Indiana. Octave Chanute was in charge of the railroad crew. Octave was trained as a Civil Engineer. Chanute went on to a very interesting career in aviation. He helped the Wright brothers. The Chanute Air Force Base in Rantoul was named after him. He is often called the Father of Aviation.

Caleb Patton, local farmer, offered Chanute a deal. If he would run the new railroad through his farm, he would give Chanute half of the city lots. Chanute took the deal. There was a problem. Several other farmers were not happy with this plan.

Chanute then demonstrated his creativity. He sneaked in and his crew completed the RR on a weekend when Pontiac courthouse closed. No injunction could be obtained on a week-end with the court house close. There was a State law that once locomotive had run over the track, you can not remove track.

Chanute wanted to call it Pattonville, but they decided on Fairbury instead. Immediately, there were houses moved from Avoca into Fairbury. Some houses were moved to McDowell and Kankakee. Can you imagine horses moving entire houses!

Somehow Fairbury got miss-spelled on its application for a U.S. Post Office. It was called Fairburg for a couple years until it was corrected. A few post cards exist with the Fairburg post mark. Nobody knows why Fairbury was selected as the town name.

Only other Fairbury in U.S. is Fairbury, Nebraska. Woodford G. McDowell, a capitalist from Fairbury, Illinois, also foresaw the advantages of a railroad coming through Nebraska and came to claim 160 acres. He gave 80 acres of land for a town site. The streets in Fairbury, Nebraska, are named in a similar fashion to the streets in Fairbury,

Illinois. The north and south streets from First to Eighth, and the east and west streets from A to H streets.

CHAPTER 3

Historical Information Sources

The three main history books about Livingston County and Fairbury are the 1878, 1888, and 1908 history books. All three books have been digitized. One can search all 6,000 pages in less than 10 minutes!

Another primary source of Fairbury history is the book by Alma Lewis James titled Stuffed Clubs & Antimacassars. She focuses on the period from 1857 until 1900. She intentionally did not focus on history after 1900 because she said it changed so dramatically at the turn of that century.

Fairbury Blade microfilm is another primary source. We need to get it digitized to allow easy searching for historical information.

The Pontiac Daily Leader microfilm is another source. Some of the Leader has been digitized on Ancestry.com, but not before 1970.

Surprisingly, the digital archives of the Chicago Tribune are free to the public.

The Pantagraph has been digitized, clear back to 1860. You must pay a nominal annual fee to get access.

The Fairbury and Pontiac libraries are also good sources.

Google searches are also useful. This includes searching Google Books because often there are books or trade journals that have Fairbury related information.

U.S. Patent searches are also useful. The web site USPTO.gov is a good source for patents after 1970. Before 1970, use Google searches to find the patent number, then go to the government web site to find the whole patent.

The Fairbury area cemeteries can be searched on the Dominy Memorial Library web site. They also have Mylar maps of the main cemeteries.

Three ladies from Livingston county wrote down all the grave stone information from the Fairbury area cemeteries. These are in two book volumes at the Dominy Library.

Update:

After this radio segment was broadcast, we discovered maps of early Fairbury. Mylar copies of the earliest 1885 maps are at the Dominy Library and the Echoes Museum.

CHAPTER 4

National Fame

Dr. Francis Townsend is Fairbury's most nationally famous citizen. He grew up on his father's farm east of Fairbury. His father tiled their farm. After it was tiled, he sold the farm and moved out west. Francis was age 17 when their family moved out west.

Townsend became a medical doctor and married a nurse. He suffered from poor health his whole life. He ended up in California with its milder climate. When Townsend was near the time of retirement, he reviewed his life. He was over age 60, in poor health, and his wife would not be able to work much longer. He came up with the idea for a national political movement to promote his old age pension plan. His movement became very popular across the United States and the members flooded their Congressional representatives with letters asking for an old age pension plan.

The political pressure created by the Townsend Movement forced President Roosevelt to come up with an old-age pension plan. This is the Social Security system we still have today.

The second most nationally famous Fairbury citizen would be Carl Goudy, the famous motorcycle racer. He raced in the 1910 to 1920 era. He is in the AMA motorcycle Hall of Fame.

Carl Goudy was a popular racer, representative and team manager for Chicago-based Excelsior motorcycles. Throughout the 1910s, he raced in AMA Class A (factory) competition on dirt and board tracks across the country.

Goudy placed third at the inaugural Dodge City, Kan., 300-mile race on July 4, 1914. He won the 300-mile race at Chicago's Maywood board track on Sept. 12, 1915, with a time of 3:29:51 and average speed of nearly 86 mph., which was a world record for motorcycles at the time. He placed third at the July 4, 1915, 300-mile race at Dodge City.

Carl's brother, Bill, raced in the same era and is also a member of the AMA Motorcycle Hall of Fame.

Chapter 5

Fairbury and the Coal Mines

John and his son Henry L. Marsh was some of the first citizens of Fairbury. They owned most of the west side of Fairbury. They came from New York and brought knowledge of coal formations with them. In 1860, they dug a shaft and found coal at 180 feet. This led to Pontiac finding coal in 1865, a second Fairbury shaft in 1868, Streator finding coal in 1872, Cornell finding coal in 1875, and Cayuga finding coal in 1878. The total output of Livingston County mines, in 1907, was 269,811 tons.

This led to three operating coal mines in Fairbury. The 1st mine was about 1 mile west of town, and it closed in 1925. The 2nd mine was by the west end by Honeggers, and it closed in 1904. The 3rd mine in town was by the Timber Ridge entrance on 7th street, and it operated from 1886 - 1941. Several people alive today that went with their fathers to this mine to get coal.

The Illinois Geological Survey has aerial maps showing the area mined. A good portion of the west side of town has coal mine shafts under it. Large portion of southeast part of town has shafts under it from 55 years of mining.

The three coal mines had a big impact Fairbury. The mines created coal mining jobs. This drew people to Fairbury, including from Europe. Theresa Ripley researched her genealogy and traced the O'Sullivans back to Ireland for example. Her Book, Irish Roots: Finding the O'Sullivans is available on Amazon.com. Her book is the fascinating story of how people came from Ireland to America. In Ireland, the Potato famine caused so many deaths that they ran out of caskets. They made re-usable caskets with hinged bottoms. They held a ceremony like a funeral when people were leaving for America. They knew they were unlikely to ever see each other again. She also describes the very long and difficult journey by ship. Her ancestor came to Fairbury and worked in the Coal Mines until he saved enough money to buy a farm. He and his wife are buried in the Catholic cemetery north of Fairbury.

Today, there is almost no trace of coal mining left. Marsh donated land for a city park, which is a beautiful, heavily wooded park on the west side.

One very small slag pile along the tracks just east of the elevator. There used to be slag pile just west of Fairbury, but it is now gone. Fairbury has had no major known issues with the ground sinking. Back around 1900, one track of the railroad track sank one foot, but this is the only case I know of.

The State may have some tunnel maps, hope to check this out in Springfield someday.

Coal mining is a dangerous occupation, even today. We have found newspaper accounts of 2 or 3 deaths in the mines.

One Fairbury coal mining trivia item is Bat Masterson. He supposedly worked at a Fairbury coal mine for couple of years before heading out west to become a law man. We have picture with Bat and his mining crew. He then went west and became a marshal in Dodge City, Kansas.

Update:

As a result of the WJEZ radio broadcast, we found tunnel maps of the longest running Fairbury coal mine by Timber Ridge. We also discovered after further research, the Bat Masterson story is a myth.

[Chapter 6](#)

Fairbury and the 1893 Columbian Exposition

Back before the age of television, millions of Americans attended the World Fairs held in various American cities. The 1893 World's Fair was held in Chicago, and many Fairbury citizens attended the fair.

In 2004, Erik Larson published a book titled *The Devil in the White City: A Saga of Magic and Murder at the Fair that Changed America*. He combined two different stories into this one book. The first story is the history of designing and building the 1893 World's Fair. The second story is about Dr. H. H. Holmes. Dr. Holmes was one of America's worst serial killers. He designed a hotel where visitors to the World's Fair could stay, but might not check out because Dr. Holmes murdered them. He possibly murdered over 200 people in the couple of years he lived in Chicago. His hotel included rooms where he gassed visitors, with an acid vat or gas chamber in the basement to dispose of his victim's bodies. He sold skeleton to medical schools around Chicago.

It turns out that Fairbury had a strong connection to the 1893 Chicago World's Fair. John Virgin was a nationally known importer of large draft horses from France. He was a strong supporter of the Fairbury Fair and the Illinois State Fair. The Governor of Illinois appointed John Virgin of Fairbury to the committee that planned the 1893 Chicago World's Fair. Virgin was responsible for the Agricultural portion of fair.

William Stackpole, another early Fairbury citizen, suggested that domes be used on the new World's Fair buildings. Mr. Stackpole made and lost three fortunes during his lifetime. His house is still standing in southeast corner of Marsh Park. Domes were used.

Thomas A. Beach of Fairbury also visited the World's Fair. Mr. Beach was probably the wealthiest man to ever live in Fairbury. His net worth at his death likely exceeded \$50 million in 2014 dollars.

The Beach family got a special tour of the World's Fair before it officially opened. It is likely that John Virgin probably arranged this special tour. Thank goodness the Beach family did not stay in the murder hotel! The Beach family descendants went on to donate many things to the City of Fairbury.

Many Fairbury citizens worked at the Keeley Institute in Dwight, when it was in operation. Thousands of Americans came to Dwight to be cured of alcoholism. The treatment involved injecting traces of gold into the patient's bloodstream. A pretty young nurse at the Keeley Institute was lured to Chicago by Dr. Holmes. He courted her, but eventually grew tired of her and asphyxiated her in an air-tight room in his hotel.

I recently completed a new book titled *Fairbury, Illinois and the 1893 Chicago Columbian Exposition*. I used Erik Larson's technique and combined two stories into one book. My book combines the story of serial killer Dr. H. H. Holmes and the Fairbury citizens involved in the World's Fair.

Fortunately, to the author's knowledge, no Fairbury citizens came up missing from the fair. It is interesting to speculate if any of Fairbury's citizens spent the night at Dr. Holmes hotel while visiting the 1893 Columbian Exposition.

Some of the consumer products developed for the 1893 Columbian Exposition are still with us today. These include Cracker Jacks, Cream of Wheat, Hershey Bars, Juicy Fruit gum, Quaker Oats, Shredded Wheat, Pabst Blue Ribbon beer, and Aunt Jemima's pancakes.

[Chapter 7](#)

Fairbury and the Railroads

The history of Fairbury automatically includes the history of the railroads, because Fairbury was founded in 1857 when the TP&W tracks were laid. We will talk further about the TP&W in a minute.

By 1875, there were 12 passenger trains and numerous freight trains passing through Fairbury every day. There were 3 depots at one time.

A second railroad was the Chicago & Paducah Railroad. It ran from Dwight, south through Pontiac, McDowell, Fairbury and to Strawn. The Fairbury to Strawn track was not in operation very long. The Fairbury to Pontiac tracks remained in service until the late 70's or early 80's. This track ran through our farm in Lodemia, north of Fairbury. In the 1960's, we would lay pennies on the track so the train could flatten them. You could also lumber and pick it up at McDowell after it came in on the train.

The TP&W has a colorful history. It is most famous for 1887 Chatsworth train wreck. The railroad had a lot of surplus track and cars laying idle most of the time. So why not offer low cost tourist trains?

The TP&W started to offer low cost tourist trains. One of these was the Peoria to Niagara Falls run. They used two locomotives for this short train for some reason. Earlier that day, the track workman forgot to put out brush fire. The fire slowly spread to a wooden supported small bridge. The engineers saw a fire ahead and jumped from 1st locomotive. The engineer in the second locomotive could not see the fire ahead. They found his severed arm still on the throttle after the wreck.

The wooden cars telescoped into each other. The wreck scene must have looked like a war zone. Four cars ended up stacked on top of each other. One man was so badly injured that he asked for

a gun. Another passenger loaned him his gun. The man crawled a short distance from the wreckage, and then shot himself. No Fairbury citizens were killed, but some were injured. Most passengers got on at Peoria and suffered the greatest losses.

Mrs. Stoutemyer, who was from Chatsworth, wrote the most detailed book about the 1887 train wreck.

The TP&W is the only Railroad whose President was assassinated. It also has a long history of very long strikes. In one of those strikes around World War II, the Federal Government took over the railroad for the balance of the war. After the war, the railroad was returned to George McNear, who was President of the TP&W Railroad. McNear was murdered in 1947 on the sidewalk, walking home from Bradley basketball game. His murder is a mystery that's never been solved. Fairbury businessmen sued the TP&W about losing business on one of the long strikes. The TP&W had no money, so nothing came of suit.

A great source for TP&W history is the DVD produced by Green Frog Productions. It has many scenes of trains passing through small towns including Fairbury

Chapter 8

The Rivalry Between the Fairbury and Pontiac Boys

This story comes from Alma Lewis James' book *Stuffed Clubs & Antimacassars*. This is a great book on the lifestyle in Fairbury between 1857 and 1900. Copies of her book are still available at the Echoes Museum and other Fairbury stores.

Let us first explain a Stuffed Club circa 1890. The McDowell brothers were the orniest boys to ever live in Fairbury. They discovered a new sport. For several nights, they hung around the dark alley of the Arcade Block, busily cracking all heads that came into reach, and there were a fair number of casualties before they were caught and arrested. They were let off with a fine, but Scibird's next paper, which was published weekly, carried the account of the outrage under the headlines: "Rubber Hose, \$9.45 a foot."

After further ingenious development, their weapon became known as the "stuffed club", and it was widely used in Fairbury on the after-theatre crowds and Saturday night shoppers. The victims were so numerous that when a "club" was finally captured and put on exhibition at the Blade office, it drew crowds eager to inspect it.

It proved to be a canvas sack, six inches in diameter and twelve inches long. It was tightly stuffed with excelsior and coarse salt, and tied to a stick two feet long. (Excelsior is wood shavings used as a packing material)

As a weapon it had range, weight and flexibility, and quite easily knocked a man unconscious. For years, anyone attending Quarterly Church Conference in Fairbury learned to be unusually wary.

A few well-placed arrests finally put a stop to the "stuffed club" activities. In 1890, the exasperated village fathers ended the rest of the trouble with an ordinance providing a twenty-five dollar fine for anyone maliciously disturbing a church service. (\$665 fine in 2015 dollars).

Now let's move on to the courting of young ladies in 1890's. There was no radio or TV, so often they just sat on the girl's front porch. The girl might play piano while the boy sang. They might take a buggy ride as well.

Now the Pontiac boys had reputation of being fancy, stylish dressers. They wore plug hats and were regular Beau Brummels per Alma Lewis James. Beau Brummel was a very dapper dresser in an 1890 Clyde Fitch play. A plug hat was a top hat. It was a short version of an Abe Lincoln stove pipe hat.

The first time a Pontiac boy appeared in Fairbury to court a young lady, he was let off with a warning, since it was considered that ignorance was the cause of the mistake. But if he came again, they waited until he had reached his destination, and there in plain sight, while he paused at the gate to wipe the dust off his shoes with his pocket handkerchief, they fell upon him with rotten eggs. One dose of this was usually sufficient to keep him clear of the town.

But if his bravery exceeded his discretion, and he came calling a third time, he got the stuffed club treatment, which was sure to be conclusive!!

[Chapter 9](#)

Fairbury Murders

I researched and found total of 8 murders since town founded in 1857. My research results were published in a new book titled ***History of Murders Committed in Fairbury, Illinois.***

Fairbury's first murder occurred in 1896 in a farm house south of town. Charles Burrell, a 26 year-old farm hand, was smitten with the farmer's 17 year-old daughter, Ida Mae Steers. When she refused his affections, he shot her and then killed himself.

Fairbury has the unusual distinction of having two City Marshall's murdered. In 1899, Sam Rightsell refused to pay his \$30 bill to Doctor Thatcher. The court issued a judgment against Sam and ordered him to pay the bill. Constable Joseph Galloway removed a horse and a cow from Rightsell's house when he was not home. The livestock was taken to the livery stable to be sold to pay the Doctor's bill. Rightsell became enraged. He tried to shoot Constable Galloway, but ended up being shot himself. He limped to the Bartlett house at the corner of 5th and Walnut streets. He hid in the cellar. The police were called. City Marshall Fred Baird responded to the call. Unaware of the previous altercation between Constable Galloway and Sam Rightsell, Baird started to go

down the cellar stairs. Rightsell shot City Marshall Fred Baird to death. The whole city of Fairbury mourned the loss of Fred Baird because he was both a City Marshall and the Chief of the Fire Department.

In 1908, Fairbury voted to go "dry" and eliminate the evils of alcohol. In May of 1910, the city voted to resume alcohol sales. On the first day the saloons re-opened, Ray Scriven spent all day drinking in the saloons. That evening, on Main Street, Scriven threatened to kill young Cora Smith. Cora was walking to the train station to mail a letter. City Marshall Amos Brown was notified and he confronted Scriven. A tussle occurred between the two men on the west end of Main Street. Scriven pulled a revolver and shot City Marshall Amos Brown dead. Scriven ran from the murder scene, and was never apprehended for the crime. A wanted poster was issued for Ray Scriven using his Fairbury Township varsity football team picture. This is the only Fairbury murder where the killer was never caught and brought to trial. There is one report that Ray Scriven died about 1949 when he was 65 years old.

In 1917, Ernest Reutter owned a barber shop and employed two barbers. Business was good, so he hired a third barber, Eli Limeberry. Unfortunately, it turned out that Eli was an alcoholic. After having problems with Limeberry in his barber shop, Ernest Reutter fired Limeberry. Every day around noon, Reutter walked from his barber shop to his house for lunch. A couple days later, Limeberry waited until Reutter started his daily walk home for lunch. An argument occurred, and Limeberry shot Reutter to death. The murder occurred at the intersection by the Methodist Church and Ace Hardware.

In 1928, James Churchill was driving a horse-drawn wagon full of rock on First Street about three miles north of Fairbury. The rock came from his father's quarry north of Fairbury by the river on First Street. Churchill encountered a blue Chevrolet driven by Harice Leroy Carter. Carter was a young black man who worked in a restaurant in Forrest. He had three female passengers in his Chevrolet. They were returning to Fairbury after fishing on the Vermilion River.

An argument occurred about who had the right-of-way on the one-lane road. A heated verbal exchange took place, and finally Carter went around the wagon and on to Fairbury. In Fairbury, one of the women passengers in the car gave Carter a gun and encouraged him to go drive back and shoot Churchill. Carter then drove back on First Street, found Churchill, and shot him dead. Both Carter and the woman who encouraged the crime were convicted and sent to prison.

My book is available as a Kindle e-book from Amazon. I have also printed and donated a copy of this new book to the Dominy Memorial Library in Fairbury.

[Chapter 10](#)

Fairbury Book Authors

I recently conducted research to identify all Fairbury book authors. My research results were published in a new book titled ***Fairbury, Illinois Book Authors.***

I was surprised to find there have been at least thirty-seven Fairbury book authors. These thirty-seven authors have published 162 books.

The most nationally famous Fairbury person to publish a book was Francis Townsend. He published an autobiography which includes his experiences growing up in Fairbury. Townsend initiated a national movement to implement state-funded old-age pensions. His movement is credited for pushing President Roosevelt to institute the Social Security pension system we have today.

The Fairbury authors have written books which cover almost all the major book genres. These include poetry, biographies, romance, religious, political, and various non-fiction topics.

The most prolific author is myself with sixty-one books covering financial topics and Fairbury history. The second most prolific author was Professor Lee Garber. He wrote thirty-four books about law and education. Alma Lewis James comes in third with twelve books. She is most famous for her Fairbury history book titled **Stuffed Clubs & Antimacassars**. Judith Wells is fourth on the list with eight math books.

William Stackpole wrote three books about rivers and canals. He has one U.S. Patent on a river dredging device. He is a very interesting character who made and lost three different fortunes. He ended up dying penniless. He did not have enough money to pay for grave stones for himself, his wife, and daughter. They are buried in unmarked graves in Fairbury's Graceland cemetery.

Benjamin Nussbaum wrote two extensive history books. These two books cover the North and South Side Apostolic church histories.

Dr. Ervin was a medical doctor in Fairbury in the 1960's. His book includes many stories about the time he spent living and practicing in Fairbury.

Ralph Romig was a sign-painter by profession. He was also a poet. He had one book published which contains many of his poems. Ralph was interviewed about his poetry book shortly before he passed away. He said he enjoyed life and was going to have the epitaph "It's been fun" put on his tomb stone. You can see his epitaph on his tomb stone in the small Cooper cemetery southwest of Fairbury.

Many of the books written by Fairbury authors are available at the Dominy Memorial Library or the Echoes Museum. My new book is available as a Kindle e-book from Amazon. I have also printed and donated a copy of this new book to the Dominy Memorial Library in Fairbury.

Chapter 11

Fairbury War Stories

I thought I would take a couple of stories from each of the three biggest wars.

Civil War

135 men total served in the Union Army. There were 45 from Fairbury, 41 from Indian Grove Township, 36 from Avoca Township, and 13 from Belle Prairie Township.

One gentleman elected to pay a substitute to serve in his place, Aaron Becker, a farmer south of Fairbury. This was a perfectly legal practice at the time. Aaron Becker paid \$1,000 for a substitute soldier. This is equal to \$18,959 in 2014 dollars.

Mr. Samuel M. Greenbaum found a wife during the war. From the 1878 history book, "As a trophy of the war we find Mr. Greenbaum carrying back from Richmond to Yankeedom a bride. Miss Henrietta Kayton, daughter of Henry and Caroline Kayton, residents of Baltimore, formerly of Norfolk. The marriage was celebrated in Richmond. "

They must have got along pretty well, "To them have been born six children: Moses, Oct. 18, 1867; Belle, June 14, 1869; Sadie, July 14, 1871; Carrie, Sept. 25, 1873; Walter, Nov. 25, 1875; and Jessie, March 1, 1882."

World War I

This was a very short war for America. We were only in it for about a year. As many men died of disease as combat (great flu epidemic of 1917). Most Fairbury area people went to Basic training at Camp Grant near Rockford. My grandmother, Francis Ann Bodley Maley, went to Camp Grant, then served as an Army nurse in Chicago army hospital. Later, she became the Livingston County nurse.

John Joda of Fairbury was killed in action in France. The American Legion Post 54 is named after him. He had a younger brother, Donald F. Joda, who was commonly called Doc Joda. He was an athletic trainer at Fairbury. Doc's wife was Millie Busby. She was known as Mrs. Joda, the teacher.

Mustard gas was used in WWI. Fred Churchill was badly gassed in France. He made it home from the war, but his health declined, and he died in 1924. His death was blamed on never recovering from being gassed in France. His older brother James Churchill was murdered 4 years later in 1928 over an argument over the road right-a-way with Harice Leroy Carter. The Churchills are buried at the small Avoca cemetery north of Fairbury.

Several Fairbury men made the trip to Europe by ship. But as soon as they got there, the war was over and they rode the ship back to America.

WWII

Fairbury had two POW's in Germany. One was Dwight Seale. The other was Thomas Wade Harris, commonly known as "Wade" Harris. Wade was a plumber most of his life. I worked with him summers going to college. Like so many WWII vets, he did not want to talk about the war. But Wade did have one war story he told me.

They had Americans, British, French, and Russians in the POW camp. The Germans hated the Russians the most (and probably vice-versa). The Germans made the Russians clean the latrines every day. They did get to use a big steel tank with a hose. They burned some fuel, and it created a vacuum for the hose.

The Russians did not like this latrine duty. They cooked up a scheme to get out of latrine duty. Instead of the regular fuel, they put in some gasoline. They stood back, lit it, and the whole tank blew up!! All the prisoners cheered. The Russians were extremely happy.

This happiness ended the next day, when the Russians were down in the trenches cleaning it with their hands!!

One Fairbury man served in both World Wars, Lee Garber. In WWI, he entered the service June 28, 1918 and left the service December 30, 1918. In WWII, he entered the service April 13, 1943 and left the service August 22, 1945.

Lee earned his doctorate and was a professor. He authored 34 books about education and the law. He also helped to set up the prairie grass nature area between Weston and Fairbury on Route 24.

[Chapter 12](#)

Fairbury Patents

A patent is the exclusive right to an idea for 17 years. Sixty-nine U.S. Patents were issued to Fairbury citizens since 1971.

Dana Coldren has 35 patents assigned to Caterpillar Inc. regarding diesel fuel injection.

Dale Maley has 16 patents assigned to Caterpillar Inc. regarding diesel fuel injection.

Norman Rittenhouse has 7 U.S. Patents with the following titles, Wound magnetic flux channel transverse wound stator permanent magnet motor, Electric motor assist bicycle, High-efficiency wheel-motor utilizing molded magnetic flux channels with transverse-flux stator, Electrically driven track wheels for tracked vehicles, Wind turbine generator, High-efficiency wheel-motor utilizing molded magnetic flux channels with transverse-flux, Method of fabricating a magnetic flux channel for a transverse wound motor, High-

efficiency parallel-pole molded-magnetic flux channels transverse wound motor-dynamo, High-efficiency wheel-motor utilizing molded magnetic flux channels with transverse-flux stator, Suspension system for tracked vehicles, Electrically driven track wheels for tracked vehicles, Rotary drum dryer.

Robert Daniels has three patents titled Retention assembly for retaining a panel in a window or a door , Retention assembly for retaining a panel in a window or a door, Muntin bar assembly.

Donald Slagel has one patent about a Tube Conveyor.

Lloyd Metz has one patent about an Adjustable end gate assembly for pick-up truck or other vehicle.

Argil Luttrell has one patent about a Mobile sit-on toy crane.

Howard Alm has one patent about a Variable Voltage Divider.

Ralph Hoffman has one patent about a Sink clamp.

Christian Huette has one patent about a Combination container and spreader package for particulate material.

Lyle Honegger and Joseph Stevenson have one patent about a Movable animal house.

One of our most famous inventors was Henry Judson Odell 1855-1919. He lived in Fairbury from age 7 until about age 26. He invented a corn planter attachment while living in Fairbury. He then moved to Lake Geneva, Wisconsin and invented a typewriter. He then moved to Glendora, California, and invented a razor blade. His body buried in Glendora, but there is Fairbury tomb stone with reference to him.

He made national news when he was in California making razor blades. A newspaper article about him made national news, "The notion that there is no chance for a working girl is dispelled by the story of Miss Lulu Branstetter of Kansas City, who answered a newspaper advertisement for a demonstrator in a Los Angeles manufacturing concern and was told by the president of the company, Levi Judson Odell, that her hands were too soft to work, Now she is Mrs. Levi Judson Odell."

There are many indicators that this is not a true story. Mr. Odell was still married to his first wife. A few years later after this article, she was back home, still with her maiden name, according to the census. But the story made sensational newspaper reading!

Chapter 13

Fairbury and the Indians

A common question I get is, "Were there Indians in Fairbury when the first settlers came?"

Back in 1832, there was the tense 4 months Black Hawk War. It ran from May through August. The early settlers got nervous the Indians might attack. There was a tribe of 630 Kickapoo Indians who lived a couple miles south of Fairbury, then moved to Chatsworth area.

This same year, Wm. Popejoy., John Hanneman and Franklin Oliver located, and soon took an active part in the affairs of the settlement. Black Hawk maintained his position, and the situation of the settlers became alarming, as it was not known what attitude the Kickapoo Indians (numbering 630) at Oliver's Grove, would assume ; and, on the 20th of May, they were waited upon by a deputation of whites for the purpose of ascertaining their intentions.

At this meeting, the venerable Franklin Oliver presided. On their return from the council, the members of the deputation stopped at the McDowell cabin and took dinner, and they advised the settlers either to abandon their homes or proceed to erect fortifications.

The latter scheme was impracticable, for the reason that there were but two rifles in the whole settlement, and very little ammunition.

On the 27th of May, all the white men in the settlement held a council, and it was then and there decided that the best thing that could be done, under the circumstances, was to retire to the white settlements in Indiana; and, on the evening of the 28th, the entire white population camped in and around the McDowell cabin, preparatory to a march the next morning.

This company consisted of the McDowell family, and William Popejoy, Abner Johnson, Uriah Blue, Isaac Jordan and John Hanneman, and their families-thirty-one souls in all.

The good news is they went to Indiana for a brief period, then returned home safely.

Alma Lewis James also made reference to arrowheads, "In early Fairbury the section of the Sunken Park and through Edith Bartlett Puffer's residence and the Taylor house was known as the Commons. This had been an Indian battlefield and the last stand was taken where the Stevens Apartments and Amish Church are now. As a little girl, Aunt Emma Taylor used to go out on the Commons and pick up arrow heads, and they were just thick where they made that last stand."

Unfortunately, Alma did not include any dates in her Stuffed Club book, except we know it covered 1857 through 1900. She stated she did not want to cover life after 1900,

because it changed too much. There are some dates in the Nicks from the Blade, but none on this Indian story.

By about 1837, all of the Indians were removed from Illinois. The township south of Fairbury is called Indian Grove, probably because of the Indians living there when the first settlers arrived.

Native Americans have lived here since about 8,000 B.C. In the 1940's and 1950's, Indian artifact collecting was very popular. There are several newspaper stories about Fairbury men who accumulated large artifact collections in that time frame. There are still Indian artifacts being found in the Fairbury area. You can see some Fairbury artifacts at the old Courthouse history room, recently donated by William Gould.

[Chapter 14](#)

Dominy Memorial Library

Back at the turn of the last century, 1900, Fairbury was a booming town, but no library. Lorenzo Dominy was a wealthy banker and landowner. Beach & Dominy was their bank. Thomas Beach was the \$50M guy with the "Lion" house on Hickory Street in Fairbury.

Lorenzo Dominy married Phoebe Ann Curl. They had a daughter Hazel born in 1884. Then daughter Hazel died in July of 1901, just 2 months past her 17th birthday. Mr. and Mrs. Dominy started a plan to donate money to fund a library in memory of their 17 year-old daughter.

Then Mr. Dominy dies a year later in July of 1902, age 58. Then the Walton Bros. announced their plan for a library. Mrs. Dominy was forced to move quickly, before the Walton Bros. built their library. She chose a site at the corner of 3rd and Walnut, as Mr. Dominy wanted. Mrs. Dominy's requirements for the library were: It must be completed by January , 1905, she had the right to name the building and it would never be changed, she would list the rules the library would be operated by, the City would forever maintain the building and keep it a free public library.

Her rules were accepted. Construction started in the Fall of 1904. Paul O. Moratz of Bloomington, was hired as the architect. He designed libraries for Edwardsville, El Paso, Fairbury, Farmington, Greenville, Paxton, Pekin and many other small to medium size communities.

By the Spring of 1905 it was completed at cost of \$12,000, (\$320,000 in 2015 dollars). The new library was dedicated on June 12, 1905 as the Dominy Memorial Library.

The library has unique architecture with a large dome for reading room. Inside the dome is a large reading room, with a fireplace and a clock.

A couple years ago, a major building addition completed. It is now a very modern, up-to-date library. It has a large community conference room in the basement. They have a summer reading program for children.

Some of the libraries historical related assets include the microfilm of the Blade Newspaper, a history section, an online search of all Fairbury area cemeteries, Mylar maps of area cemeteries, the two volumes of books that cover every cemetery in county.

You can also borrow books from remote libraries. They have Alma Lewis James's Stuffed Clubs & Antimacassars book and all four of my Fairbury history books.

The library staff very patient and helpful. They put up with my hours of researching Blade microfilm. I donated the 1885 Mylar maps of Fairbury.

The library is one block south of Main Street. It is actually south of the historic old city hall. It stands out because of the large dome.

I have my own unique story about the library. I grew up on a farm. In the mid 1960's, if I was well behaved for the week, I might get to go to town with Mom to Dave's supermarket for her weekly shopping trip. I went to Dave's and got an empty grocery box and then went to library. I filled up the grocery box with books. The librarian bent the rules of only loaning one book at a time, as long I promised to read and return them all in 1 week! I went on to enjoy a lifetime of reading, have written many technical papers, books, etc.

"Thank goodness for librarians that bend the rules!"

Chapter 15

Echoes Museum in Fairbury

Our nation's bi-centennial in 1976 spurred a renewed interest in history in Fairbury. The concept of creating a museum under the direction of the Dominy Memorial Library board was put into action in 1976.

The initial impetus for its development was carried out by Henry Phillips, Pearl Jeffries, Bea Tetley, Frances Lindsay, Fay Kyburz, Paul Mason, Dorothy Nussbaum, Ken Elliott, Mary Orth and O.L. Hawk.

Floyd & Marion Stafford's purchase and donation of the Carrithers home located at 105 E. Walnut made the museum a reality. This house was once owned by Phoebe Dominy, grandmother of Marion Stafford, and was later owned by the family of Judge C.F.H. Carrithers.

After many volunteer hours preparing not only the structure, but also the holdings of the museum which were donated by many members of the community, the museum opened on June 23, 1979.

After 24 years, major maintenance problems developed with the Carrither's home. The Library had long-term plans to expand to the east where Carrither's home was located. With the library board's encouragement, the committee re-organized as a not-for-profit corporation in 2003 and purchased the current location (126 West Locust or Main Street).

The board of directors responsible for this improvement were Nancy Ifft, Jean Jensen, Ann Kennedy, Peggy Metz, Donna McCue, Diane Pawlowski, Dorothy Reis, Lois Simpson, and Ruth Teubel.

The Museum seeks to preserve historical material from Fairbury and the surrounding areas and to make that material accessible to the public.

Key points about the Museum include: admission is Free, group visits can be arranged by calling the museum at 815-692-2191, Located on Locust or "Main Street" across from Steidinger Tire, Has its own Facebook page with historical info, also has its own web site with historical info, Many old business items on display, Country school map on display, Many high school senior class pictures on display, photographs of our two City Marshals that were killed in the line-of-duty, Amos Brown and Fred Baird, 1888 photo of John Virgin's Horse Palace, great history library room including my 4 Fairbury history books, 1885 Mylar maps of Fairbury, one room that rotates a historical display several times a year, and you can buy copies of Alma Lewis James' book Stuffed Clubs & Antimacassars.

You can also buy a copy of Buckle on the Corn Belt, a series of Blade articles on

The Museum's summer hours from March thru December are Thurs & Fri, 1:00 to 4:30, and Saturday 9:00 to 11:30 AM.

Chapter 16

Fairbury History Day Trip

This chapter tells how to visit as many historical items as possible in a day-trip to Fairbury.

I want to thank Diane Palowski and Helen Steidinger for helping me prepare this material.

If you arrive in the morning, you should drive by the Thomas A. Beach lion house on Hickory street by the high school. It is on the U.S. National Register of Historic Places. Thomas Beach was a banker and businessman. He was worth \$50M in today's dollars when he died. You should note the unique architecture of the house. It is a fine example of Italianate architecture. The house was built in 1872. Note the 2 lions in the front yard. Note that this is a

private residence, so there are no tours. You can easily see the house from the sidewalk or the street.

You should next drive down Main Street. Note the historic 1892 City Hall. It still has jail cells in the back of the building. It is also on the U.S. National Register of Historic Places.

The new city hall is on west end of Main Street. You should stop in and pick up some historic CD's of Fairbury.

Walton's Department Store building is also on Main Street across from Old City Hall. It burned down at least 3 times. It burned twice in this location. It was last rebuilt in 1925. It now houses a furniture store on the 1st floor and a banquet hall on the 2nd floor.

One block south of old City Hall is Dominy Memorial Library. Note the unique architecture with the large dome. It was built in 1904. Please stop in and walk through reading room under the dome. Also chat with the Librarians.

If it is open, stop in at the Echoes Museum on Main Street across from Steidinger tire. If you have a group call the museum ahead of time. You can purchase a copy of Alma Lewis James' book Stuffed Clubs & Antimacassars, history of Fairbury. The admission is free!

Next you can shop on main street at gift shops and antique stores. I recommend lunch at Lost-n-Time on Main Street across from Post Office. This is the historic Claudon bank building, built 1893. You can see the bank vault inside. John Conerus's cigar factory was upstairs. Chat with the very friendly waitresses. The placemats will have info on Fairbury shopping.

Next is shopping at the other two antique stores on US 24. They often have Fairbury related items for sale. Also see one of the Dominy houses where 3rd Street intersects Route 24. This is the same street as old City Hall and the Dominy Library. L.B. Dominy built a house for each of his 3 daughters.

Next drive south on 1st street to Kilgus Farms Store. This is a self-serve store. You can see the dairy cows as well.

Now drive east to 7th street and take 7th street back to town. You will come to Indian Creek Country Club. You can fit in a round of golf if you are a golfer. The course is on top of Fairbury's largest coal mine along 7th street. Across from the golf course is the Timber Ridge subdivision with it's own pond.

You have to fit in a stop at Dave's Supermarket Deli for a 50 cent ice-cream cone! Dave's has been in business since 1950 and is an important part of Fairbury's history.

If you are doing a Saturday trip, you can take in the stock car races at the speedway south on 1st street on Saturday night.

You can get more information at the web site, FairburyILAttractions.com

Chapter 17

Fairbury Area Ghost Towns

Avoca

Avoca was located about 2.5 miles north of Fairbury on Indian Creek. The early settlers probably picked this location because it was on a creek, and less than 1 mile from the Vermilion River. The first ferry was over Vermilion River. It was a raft made of red elm logs. When the river was too high to ford, they put their wagons and freight on raft, but horses had to swim across.

One winter day, a man was in a hurry to cross using the ice on the river. He put his horses on large cake of ice, but cake broke in two after the horses got on it. The horse's forefeet were on 1 piece, and hind feet on another. He finally got the horses on 1 piece of ice and paddled it over. he put the wagon on another piece of ice and got it over also, and then went on his way!

The Methodist Episcopal Church at Avoca is long gone now. The Echoes Museum does have banner that used to be hung in the church. I am not aware of any pictures of the old church.

The Village of Avoca was laid out in 1854 by Judge W.G. McDowell, who owned the land on which it was located. It was surveyed by Amos Edwards, then county surveyor. The first store in it was opened just before it was laid out as a village, by the McDowells , as noticed in the preceding pages, and for several years it was a flourishing business place. The first post office was established in 1840. Avoca Cemetery, across the creek from the village, was laid off by the elder McDowell. He and those of his family who have departed this life are buried there. Susan Philips was the first one to occupy the place, and was buried in it in August, 1833.

"But on the laying out of Fairbury, the sun of Avoca began to decline."

Many of the houses were moved to Fairbury and still stand today. The last funeral in Avoca church was in 1926. The church was torn down in 1935 and the lumber was used at the Methodist camp in Lake Bloomington.

The only thing left is Avoca Cemetery and the township is still named Avoca.

Champlin

There used to be railroad from Fairbury to Pontiac, called the Chicago & Paducah railroad. Moses Champlin moved to a farm about 3 miles northwest of Fairbury in 1860. He came from New York. His wife was Tirzah Stanley of New York. They had 6 children. He was 51 years old when he arrived. His farm of 320 acres was next to the railroad tracks.

He built a grain elevator next to the tracks. We don't know what his ambitions were, have a town there? Nothing else happened except elevator. Elevator is still standing, but on its last legs. The train stop was called Champlin.

Update:

The Champlin grain elevator was torn down in the summer of 2016. The wood is being recycled for other uses.

Lodemia

It was between Fairbury and Pontiac on the old Chicago and Paducah railroad line. One of the early settlers was John Edward Bodley, Sr. from Fountain County, Indiana. He was my great-great grandfather.

He donated land for a church, which was built. Lodemia had a postmaster, country school, Township Hall, and grain elevator. My father, Charles Maley attended this country school. My brother, Brad Maley, later bought one of the desks where my father had inscribed his name.

Lodemia never had more than about 6 houses. The family names in this area were Bodley, Tollensdorf, Maley, Tavener, Ziller, Smallwood, Perkins, Metz, and Gould.

In the 1960's, the ABC (Avoca Betterment Club) met at the Township . They had projects to improve their homes and lands. The meeting minutes still exist for their meetings. Some photographs also exist of the activities. I remember going to meetings at the Township Hall. Eventually all the buildings burned down. The grain elevator was raised and house sets on its foundation. So basically there is no trace left of Lodemia.

Potosi

The village of Potosi was started by Dr. Abraham Green. In the Civil War, he enlisted in Company F, 136th Illinois Volunteer Infantry. After the war he attended Rush Medical College in Chicago for two years, 1865 - 1866.

There was a main road from Fairbury to Saybook that went through the middle of section 7, 9, and 16 in Bell Prairie Township. A schoolhouse was built east of the intersection of the two main roads. A post office, called Potosi, was located at the home north of the intersection in Livingston County. It was established February 18, 1868. David S. Crum was named postmaster.

A map of Belle Prairie Township, drawn about 1877 - 1878, shows four houses. In October 18, 1879, Potosi -- Every house is full; every shop at work. The people of Potosi have given up all hope of having a railroad put through here by the Wabash Company.

In 1880, the Blacksmith shop was moved to Cropsey and Dr. Green moved his store to Colfax. On March 27, 1880, the post office was discontinued .

There is only a historical marker is left today on 1st street south of Fairbury. It says, "Site of Village of Potosi. Established 1866 by Dr. Green, preacher, physician, druggist, postmaster, and manager of the general store. Village consisted of.....one-room schoolhouse, blacksmith shop, shoe store, general store, residences. Cropsey Woman's club.....1976."

Rosealthe or Rosalthe

Rosealthe, was a small village on the east side of Section 13 in the Southeast corner of Belle Prairie township. It was originally called Alsop.

Daniel B. Stewart, founder of Anchor, was responsible for establishing a trading center there. Mr. Stewart, who owned many acres of land in Anchor township, was one of the leaders in the movement to get Clinton, Bloomington and Northeast railroad extended from the northwest into Fayette, Cropsey, Anchor and Martin townships.

Mr. Cook stated that Rosealthe was located on low ground, and that mud and water were problems. A report in the Cropsey news dated Feb. 12, 1881, confirms this: "D. B. Stewart, the celebrated landlord and owner of Rosealthe, gave a ball in the city hall for the benefit of the citizens of which there was one represented. The balance living in the suburbs could not go, owing to the disappearance of the sidewalks on account of mud and water, but, nevertheless they had a good time, as they sent for the Anchorians who arrived a little before midnight on a special train."

On March 19, 1881, there was mention of another ball at Rosealthe. Stephen Herr, who lived across the road from Rosealthe, in Section 18, Fayette, township, was appointed postmaster on March 25, 1881.

On Sept. 10, 1881, the item in the Cropsey, news stated, "Reports are that as a last resort, a gallon house is being put up at Rosealthe in hopes of saving that place from death."

Note: A gallon house is a tavern that sells liquor.

Stephen Herr was a farmer, livestock grower and grain buyer. Grain was loaded at Rosealthe. Stephen Herr began buying grain in Cropsey in May 1885. The following December it was reported, "Mr. Herr moved his little house to Cropsey and fixed it up for an office. There was now one house left in what had been the city of Rosealthe."

In January 1886, the Rosealthe depot, was moved to Cropsey and was to be used as a section house. The post office at Rosealthe was discontinued on March 3, 1886. No trace of the town or the place where the railroad siding once was can be found.

We did find photo of postcard post marked Rosealthe and signed by Stephen Herr just a few weeks ago

Chapter 18

Finding Old Fairbury Maps

Cindy Helmers, good family friend, got an email about county history information. She forwarded the email to me. I found that Illinois has a State Library in Springfield. I searched for Fairbury information, and up pops maps done by the Sanborn Insurance company in 1885.

Apparently, this insurance company did maps of towns for fire insurance purposes. These old maps were saved and were only available in-person to you at the Library of Congress in Washington, DC.

A few years ago, Illinois had an initiative to digitize more records, and apparently these maps got scanned in and digitized. Now they are available to everybody through the internet.

I have done Fairbury Google searches and gone until the last page, and never found these!

There are Sanborn insurance maps of Fairbury for the years 1885, 1892, 1898, 1906, and 1911.

These maps are extremely detailed and well done. They are a treasure-trove of historical information. The earliest map in 1885 has three sheets. By the time of the last map, 1911, it takes 9 sheets.

Back in the 1880's, there were small businesses in the basement in front of the stores on main street. Often you went down a stairs from the main street sidewalk to go to the business. These maps show the locations of these basement businesses.

The maps even go outside city limits. They show Rufus Straight's tile factory. The tile was needed to drain the swamp. It matches up with illustration in 1888 history book. The maps also show the coal mine one mile west of town and the coal mine by Indian creek sub-division that closed in 1941.

The maps have names of all the Fairbury businesses. They show the huge Kring green house complex that was just west of the high school. They show the Fairbury Foundry just west of Dave's Supermarket.

Joseph Slagel's machine shop at 6th and Main is shown. He made hit-n-miss engines called the Midget by his company Fairbury Motor Works. These are extremely rare engines today.

The maps show the train depots. They also show hotel locations and names. The maps include the fairgrounds and racetrack, Isaac Walton and Edison Schools, and churches.

Alma Lewis James wrote Fairbury history book Stuffed Clubs & Antimacassars. She intentionally only covered 1857 town funding until 1900. She though the whole lifestyle changed after 1900. The 1885 Sanborn map

would have been a wonderful addition to her book. She probably did not know the Sanborn maps existed when she wrote her book.

Because the Sanborn maps are so detailed, it is tough to see on a small computer screen. You have to zoom in on 1 block at a time. They are much easier to read printed out on a large sheet. I found a company that makes "D" size engineering prints. Mylar is plastic-like material that is very durable. I had the 3 sheets of the 1885 maps printed on Mylar and donated them to the Dominy Library and Echoes Museum.

The Sanborn maps are probably one of our greatest Fairbury historical finds in the last 10 years! Myself and other history buffs are still digesting all the information in the maps. They should be a great resource to anyone doing historical research about Fairbury.

Chapter 19

Health of the Early Settlers

Living in today's world, we don't appreciate the problems early settlers had with disease and consequently short life-spans.

As an example, my great-great-grandfather, John Edward Bodley Sr., came to Lodemia about 1852. They had 8 children.

Edward died at 4 years old, Della at 10, Sara at 22, Mary at 25, Margaret at 28, John Jr. at 50 (who was my great-grandfather), Thomas at 53, and William at 65.

They lost 3 young girls within an 18 month span. Only 1 child out of 8 out-lived the parents. No death certificates were required until 1916, these were in 1870's. There is only one newspaper account. The Pontiac Cemetery has no info except names and dates, no death cause.

Lucille Goodrich was County School Supt for many years. She wrote a book about Livingston county called, A Livingston County Scrapbook by Lucile Goodrich (1855-1975).

It is mostly about schools, but has a public health chapter, Chapter IX Auxiliary Services.

Early settlers brought with them malaria, milk fever, and other diseases to add to those already found here. Malaria was called the ague, shakes, the chills, bilious fever, intermittent or remittent typhoid and typhus, autumnal fever, etc.

Conditions were ideal for its development as much of the land was not yet drained and mosquitoes were plentiful. Quinine, used to cure the ague, caused ears to roar and gave one a feeling of great lassitude.

If a woman became proficient in caring for the sick, she was in great demand. She used home remedies usually made from herbs or applied poultices like mustard plaster.

Physicians were scarce and unschooled. Their chief "stock in trade" consisted of quinine, calomel, castor oil, laudanum and camphor dissolved in alcohol.

Taking baths and changing clothes were not always included in the day's schedule. Chewing tobacco and the subsequent "spitting" were common among adults. Alcoholic beverages were freely used both in sickness and in health.

Windows were not protected by any kind of screening and flies were abundant. Rats and roaches added their share. Some of the so-called "filth" diseases were typhoid, diphtheria, cholera, yellow fever and smallpox.

In 1849 an epidemic of cholera swept through the county. Other illnesses such as pneumonia, influenza, consumption (tuberculosis), milk sickness, rheumatism, tetanus, food poisoning and snakebite also flourished.

The birth rate was high but so was the death rate. A forty-year old man or woman was considered old. It is estimated that half the children born in Illinois in pioneer days died before reaching five years of age, usually from digestive disorders.

Proper food was a problem. The pioneers' main sources of food came from hunting deer, wild turkey, pigeons, opossums, ducks, geese, and quail. Fishing also helped.

James P. Morgan, Long Point, said that when he came to this section of the country in 1854, wild game of all kinds was plentiful and he had seen as many as 100 deer in a herd.

The pioneers usually set aside Saturday as their weekly hunting day. As more settlers came, game became scarce. Obtaining salt was another problem. Honey was important in the life of the pioneer. It is believed that the bee was not native to Illinois but was brought here by the settlers.

There were some vegetables grown--corn, pumpkins, cucumbers, cabbage, and tomatoes.

The cow was indispensable even though the milk sometimes caused sickness. Later, an orchard was to be a necessary adjunct to every farm. Storage, too, was a problem. Food was cooled in a bucket hung in the well or in the sod-storm cellar or fruit house.

The pioneers had some weird remedies. Long ago it was not unusual for a child to come to school with a neat homemade bag of asafetida tied on a string around his neck. This was for warding off disease, but the awful odor was enough to keep people at a distance.

Sulphur and molasses were given to children in the spring to purify their blood. Sassafras tea was also considered good. Colds were treated with goose-grease spread on the throat and chest. If the cold persisted, the child was put to bed, covered heavily, and given hot tea (sassafras, snakeroot, dogwood, willow) to make him sweat.

Warts were removed by various odd methods, such as rubbing the wart with a dish rag and then burying the dish rag.

The so-called "childhood diseases" (measles, whooping cough, chicken pox, mumps) were common among early settlers. A child attending school would contract the disease and then pass it on to the entire room or school and to the children at home.

Scarlet fever was common, too, and smallpox was a dreaded disease. Sanitation was poor and so many unnecessary cases of typhoid fever developed. In 1849 cholera claimed many victims.

The doctors got quarantine laws passed. When a child acquired a child's disease, a big red sign giving the name of the disease was nailed on the front of his house by a member of the Board of Health. When he recovered, the house had to be fumigated before the sign could be taken down and the family go out-doors again.

CONCLUSION

So we can very thankful for our modern sanitation and modern medicine!

Chapter 20

Joseph Slagel - Early Fairbury Inventor

He was born Feb 12, 1883 on a farm south of Fairbury. He was the son of Rev. Samuel Slagel and Mary Demler Slagel. His father was of German descent and born in Iowa. His mother from Switzerland.

He had a little brother Samuel who died when only 4 years old. Another brother Daniel who died in 1967. Sister Emma that died in 1961.

In the 1900 Census, we find him at age 18 living at home with his parents, his sister Emma, and brother Daniel. The father's occupation was Blacksmith and farmer. Joseph's occupation was farm laborer. He had good mechanical aptitude as a child.

When he finished country school, his father let him build his own shop on the father's farm. In September, 1903, he moves to town and sets up his own machine shop at 6th and Main streets. The machinery in his shop included lathes, drilling machines, planers, and milling machines. It was the best equipped shop in Central Illinois.

On Aug. 10, 1905, at the age of only 22, Joseph files for a U.S. Patent on a Lubricator for steam engines. Steam engines had lots of moving parts that needed constant lubrication. His invention used a pump to force the lubricant to where needed. On Sept 25, 1906 U.S. Patent number 831,899 was granted to him. No other patents were applied for per U.S. Patent Office.

On May 24, 1906, at age 23, Joseph marries Emma Wagler from Davis, Iowa. She was 21 years old.

In the 1910 Census, we find Joseph and his wife Emma married and living on Locust Street (Main Street) in Fairbury. His occupation is proprietor of a machine shop.

We check the recently discovered Sanborn insurance map of Fairbury for 1911. We find his machine shop at the corner of 6th and Main Street. He has a 50 gal gasoline can, electric lights, steam heat from boiler. The gasoline tank indicates he was making gasoline powered engines

Joseph needed source of castings to make gasoline engines. The 1885 Sanborn maps show existence of Fairbury Foundry just west of Dave's Supermarket. We also know there was a Kring Foundry in Fairbury. Many building columns on Main Street are from Kring foundry.

In 1911, we find that the early Fairbury plumber, C.B. Day, was featured in a Nov 10, 1911 story in the weekly issue of the Metal Worker, Plumber, and Steam Fitter magazine. Why was he featured in this trade magazine?

He was featured because of his unique marketing method. At the Fairbury Fair, he set up displays. For the city ladies, he showed the latest in indoor plumbing items. For farmers, he demonstrated easier ways to get water for the farm. He featured water pumps powered by Midget engines from the Fairbury Motor Works which was Joseph Slagel's company.

In 1913, age 30, Joseph was a brilliant young man. He got a patent at age 22. He had his own machine shop, Fairbury Motor Works, making hit-n-miss Midget engines. He got listed in the Automobile Trade Directory Vol 11 Issue 4 for Fairbury Motor Car Works, at 6th and Locust at Fairbury. He possibly had aspirations to make complete cars?

But the bad news was his health. He ran an ad in the March 13, 1913 issue of The Thresherman's Review magazine to sell his Fairbury machine shop.

FOR SALE - Machine Shop and Residence property, excellent opening for right party, for particulars address Joseph Slagel, Fairbury, IL

There was an article in the June 17, 1914, Pantagraph when Joseph was 31 years old:

Joseph Slagel, of the Fairbury Motor Works, has been confined to the house with a nervous breakdown and it is hoped with a much needed rest will be restored to his usual activities.

On Sept 1914, at age 31, Joseph and wife move to a ranch in Miesse, New Mexico.....near El Paso, Texas and Mexico. He and his wife built a new house.

On Sept 5, 1915, at age 32, was killed in a terrible explosion. Many early cars used acetylene gas at 250 psi to power the headlights. This was called the Prestolite tank and/or generator. Joseph was working on this system on his car and it blew up. Joseph was horribly disfigured and killed in the explosion. The newspaper account details are too graphic to air on the radio.

Acetylene systems were later replaced with electric lights for safety reasons. Joseph's body brought back to Fairbury. There was a huge funeral at the German Apostolic Church. He is buried at Graceland. His wife never remarried. She moved back to Iowa and died in 1927 age 42. She is buried in Chariton, Iowa

In 2016, a collector of hit-n-miss engines in Iowa comes across a Midget engine from Fairbury Motor Works. He contacted me for history information. He then purchased the engine. He provided complete photographs of the engine. It is so rare that none of his fellow collectors have ever seen another one (he posted on web site about these engines).

One or two more Midget engines exist in storage at Fairbury.

The data sources used for this research included Ancestry.com including U.S. Census, Find-a-grave.com...which includes obituary, Google book search...trade magazine articles and ads, Pantagraph digital archives, Google search for patents, then US Patent Office, USPTO.gov, Google search for Prestolite acetylene systems, 1885 and 1911 Sanborn insurance maps of Fairbury, email contacts with Iowa collector of hit-n-miss engines, Listing of all people buried in Apostolic Christian portion of Graceland cemetery, and The 1909 Livingston County History Book.

Chapter 21

Shedd Aquarium Connection to Fairbury

The Shedd family were originally a New Hampshire family. One son, John Graves Shedd, said he didn't want to be a farmer like his father. He wanted to try something else. He worked in small retail shops in New Hampshire and Vermont.

Another son, William, the oldest son, moved to the Fairbury area to . His farm was around the Weston area, or Yates township. We are not sure of the exact date he came, but he was here by the 1870 U.S. Census.

It is possible that William's father actually owned the farm ground. It is highly likely that John G. Shedd came to live with his brother William in Fairbury.

I found Pantagraph article that John G. Shedd was a Fairbury boy, and his father owned an extensive amount of farm land around Fairbury

The family story is that John G. Shedd tried working at Walton's Dept. Store in Fairbury. He was hired as lowest level floor sweeper. He had big ideas on how to better arrange the merchandise displays in the big outside windows at Walton's. But since he was a low level employee, the manager ignored his

ideas. This made him mad, and he left for Chicago and Marshall Fields in late 1871.

No written documentation exists on the Walton's story, but the circumstantial evidence fits.

The management of Marshall Field's was willing to listen to new ideas. One of John G. Shedd's first big ideas.....

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however, he trusted his associates to do what they were best at and kept his interference to a minimum. Although he had his hands into seemingly every aspect of the business, he didn't micromanage. He would ask pertinent questions, listen intently and then often say, "Use your best judgment."

It was this environment that brought out the best in his employees and cultivated intense loyalty to both the firm and the man. Hard work and good character paid off at Field's store, and the lowliest employee had the same opportunity to rise to the top as more experienced hires. When a twenty-two-year-old New England farm boy named John Graves Shedd applied for a position with Field and Leiter in 1872, Field offered him a position as a stock boy in linens for a salary of ten dollars per week. It was less than Shedd had made at his previous sales position in Vermont, but he sensed opportunity with Field. In much the same way that the young Field had worked diligently to prove his worth with Cooley & Farwell, Shedd vowed to make his mark on Field & Company. He didn't disappoint.

One of his earliest successes involved a revolutionary change in purchasing methods. Shedd noticed that at the end of each season, some sizes or colors remained unsold, whereas others sold through quite early. Buyers of the day simply bought according to manufacturer's recommendations or based on personal hunches, with little regard to customer preferences. Shedd believed there was a better way. With permission from his boss, Henry Willing, Shedd carefully reviewed past sales ledgers and devised a formula to determine the sell-through, or "turns," of each item. Now buyers could stock up, for example, on certain sizes and buy fewer of others. Field studied the proposal and believed it had merit. He instructed Willing to put the new system in place in the ladies' neckwear and lace department for a trial period. In that department, sales doubled within a year, and Shedd's system became the basis for all purchasing.

Shedd continued his rise at Marshall Fields. He became President when Marshall Fields died. At 50 years of service, he retired as President and they made him Chairman of the Board.

John G. Shedd became very wealthy man. Family story is that Mr. Shedd had his own luxury railroad car built. When he was going to visit his relatives at Fairbury, he sent his special car ahead of time. He would entertain family and friends at Fairbury in his luxury railroad car

He was big philanthropist. He donated \$3M to build the Shedd Aquarium, and stipulated this in his will. The aquarium was built after his death.

The aquarium cost \$3,000,000 to build, and initially included 132 exhibit tanks. [10] Groundbreaking took place on November 2, 1927, and construction was completed on December 19, 1929; the first exhibits were opened on May 30, 1930. As one of the first inland aquariums in the world, the Shedd had to rely on a custom-made railroad car, the Nautilus, for the transport of fish and seawater. The Nautilus lasted until 1959.

In 1930, 20 railroad tank cars made eight round trips between Key West and Chicago to transport 1,000,000 US gallons (3,800,000 l) of seawater for the Shedd's saltwater exhibits. In 1933, Chicago hosted its second world's fair, the Century of Progress. The Aquarium was located immediately north of the fairgrounds, and the museum gained exposure to a large international crowd.

Because he was such a major business leader and philanthropist, his death made the front page of the Chicago Tribune. His estate was worth \$15.2M in 1926 which is \$209M today. He left most of his money to his 2 daughters, but he left money to many other family members. He left \$10,000 to his niece, Dora Shedd Bennett, in Fairbury. This is about \$135,000 in today's dollars.

There is a large complex of Shedd family grave stones at the Fairbury Graceland cemetery. You see them when you enter from the 7th street entrance. John G. Shedd's father and mother both buried there, and his brother William, among others.

Chapter 22

Historic Murals

Terry Zimmerman, Alderman, formed a citizens advisory group July of 2015. He recruited me to join because of my Fairbury history knowledge. The main goals of this group were to improve quality of life for current citizens, and make Fairbury an attractive place for visitors.

Fairbury has rich historical background. How to display this historical background to residents and visitors?

I went on vacation to Cincinnati. They have huge historical murals painted on flood wall. Maysville, KY, has a smaller version.

Pontiac had the Wall Dogs paint murals.

So Fairbury has no flood walls, and very little building wall space, plus 5-year wait for Wall Dogs, and very expensive.

So what can Fairbury do?

We erected a frame and printed out existing images as historical murals. We decided to do 5 initial murals.

The first was the TP&W railroad because the town was founded when it came through. The second was coal mining. The third was Francis Townsend, father of Social Security. The fourth was the Fairbury fair and race track. The fifth mural was John Virgin, internationally known horse trader and for the 1893 World's fair

In the future, the murals can be changed out or rotated. For example, a Native American Indian mural could be added.

Then I ran into a big problem. The larger you make an image, the better resolution you need. Many of the Fairbury historical images are of very poor resolution. My solution was to re-draw the old images in new high resolution format.

For example, John Virgin's Horse Palace. The only image is from 1888 and very poor quality. I re-drew the Horse Palace building in Google's free Sketchup 3D drafting program. I drew every single board, window, door, trim and roof. It turned out very nice.

John Virgin's 1888 letterhead is another example. I re-drew each letter on the letterhead in Sketchup.

The 1st TP&W steam locomotive in 1855 was a very poor quality illustration. I re-drew it in Sketchup. The front cow-catcher with the angled bars was the hardest part to draw! But once in the computer, can make pictures of the locomotive, small plastic models using 3D printing, or children's size model like Pontiac's Route 66 cars.

I probably spent over a 100 man-hours re-drawing images.

The cost of the mural project was covered by Prairie Lands foundation

People should visit Fairbury and check out our murals. They are Main Street between old City Hall and the Post Office.

References

None

Recommended Reading

Stuffed Clubs & Antimacassars by Alma Lewis James. New copies of this book are still available from the Fairbury Echoes Museum on Main Street in Fairbury.

Web Sites

None

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Dale C. Maley

Author Spotlight

Dale C. Maley is the author of the book ***Index Mutual Funds: How to Simplify Your Financial Life and Beat the Pros***. He was also a contributing author to Chapter 18 in the 2009 book ***The Bogleheads Guide to Retirement Planning***. Dale is a very successful private investor who has been a student of Financial Planning and Investing for over 33 years.

He was trained as an engineer at the University of Illinois and has been a practicing engineer for 36 years. His accomplishments as an engineer include the granting of 16 U.S. Patents and authorship of over 535 professional technical papers. He is also a member of the International Society of Automotive Engineers and the Society of Manufacturing Engineers.

Dale earned an MBA (Masters Degree in Business Administration) degree from Illinois State University. Dale became a Registered Financial Advisor in the State of Illinois in 2006. He works part-time as a fee-only financial planner. He is President of Maley Financial Planning.

One of Dale's hobbies is history, including the history of Fairbury, Illinois. He has given several lectures to local Fairbury community groups about the history of Fairbury. Both Dale and his wife are 5th generation citizens of Fairbury.

* * * * *

Also by Dale C. Maley

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